



Bones

journal for the short verse

no. 25
April 2023

they downgrade the threat to high art

the alley windswept i fill a hummingbird

discharge notes each of three crows on a wire

the same anxious thought city moth

the ant in this thousand dollar a night hotel

amidst the mundane a terrarium

end of you snowdrops the first crocus after

glass squid looking for the party's corners

guide to birdsong
putting a blackbird on
in the rain

Grief's length...

...is an autocratic ruler. It listens for missed notes and raps on my knuckles.
It makes me repeat it again and again...

sunrise locked in a minor key

Note Left on Her Door

Winter dark - - a path through frost and
bare thickets, down to the footsteps

of daybreak, where the sun
comes up beside an old bell tower. Follow the wind and the light

into the orchard, and open your eyes
unto me

Inside a Picture of Trees

Aster vines between the trunks
Sunlight
cross-clipped by limb shadows

December
and a line of oaks burned stark by the cold

The yellowberry and nettle
share the grave of the poplar

Our world
is long alone

Prayer to The Muse

Out of the rough instant,
the second, the age,

*rain in black elms
rain in the oaks, mist*

of the high crowns

you find me
one flash ahead of my ear.

*Solomon, Soren
Bloodfire, Persephone*

Find me, Queen of Birds,
in rings of grief,
in the illegible hour,

blind and abject without you.

Closing Lines

It was the third week of March, cool wind
around the house - - Easter Sunday,
you cut the stem in two.

The roots sunk inward, hushed,
as they shrank into dirt - -

tourniquet and trench fire
empty seeds of Heaven . . .

October again, a quickened sundown.
Those few words you left here
still speak themselves - - cold petals
in the narrowing threads of light.

now in his every childhood snapshot the face of sudden death

repeated in 31 languages a suffocation warning

caught in autumn's gravity
my brother's first attempt at whistling
ends with his missing teeth

watching swallowtails
among goldenrods
no thoughts on being human



spring an old demon but then that what it's for

the violence of history
slowly as it rusts

shaving
above the ear
to fly better

when
the game of the goose
gets serious

fog clearing the future well-urned

2nd class ticket rain drops the night

first quarter moon no reason

night shore how search engines shape our world

the quarrel ends as it started electric guitar

stormclouds forming somewhere mark as read

afterlife
i try the one that worked
on you

that high lonesome when the rain ghosts us

what music within the turkey tail mushroom

wintering all the monsters in monochrome

passing train: orange juice tank tank orange juice

twittering sparrows
decades of the rosary
in 2/4 time

disassembling the lowest notes to find me

if I've done it right fishtail liner

the bible of scar tissue anchoring winter

music in the mirror's escape route

rain lessons the atlas of her hands

take a step back—
the clouds
become audible

semi-bold dark sense of an inward burning

dismantling the monument in Helvetica



tryste

wet rings inside wet rings ease the tight grain

a reliquary

the maul head split off its shaft, almost
split the stump in half

drēam

upstage song sparks the hall smoke & such blue shadow of applause

Unexpected Benefit of a Cancer Diagnosis

garbage
day tomorrow
bin to the curb I let
go to the wing-beats over my
shoulder

Inside, Moving Through Modified Martial Arts

outside
the cardinal
sings out from the cherry
tree into my head, thus changing
subjects

sold a semi-automatic handgun theater

what if Sunday School was Saturday night rain in Memphis

some of the bread broken English

walking in a coat of course wool meditation

snow drifting in places I did not say goodbye

at peace with this raft I take everywhere

fog
the sky finally
has come to church

morning glory
the blue song
of the wall

Daniel Birnbaum

late at night
the truth
of an unshaven mirror

the apartments of birds
and squirrels laid bare like bones
this frost

breeze after 99 cuts so tart cherries may once more bloom in your mouth

her laugh tickles the sweaty moon in an inappropriate locale

bite of the apple. And we never spoke again. Though, in the film

black
leaves shake
a black mood
back
to Venus

sentences, unlike elephant steps, holding up my pants,

too
fine
to
nestle
in
this
dream
your
small
hours
snowfall
voice

he asks
of time
in wind



branches
depicting
the quiet

circle simple
color yellow
one a moon

silence of autumn leaves well enough alone

mail order return of an exiled self

self-abscission
at the pace
of snow falling

From the last gospel

to revelation in this moment I speak out in the beginning word without
word without word of robin violet snail where would gleam of syrinx
petal tentacle out of a spiral strike...

a scrap of paper
dropped
feather frost-sparkled

Sanguine

Wake of a red priest scarlet woman vermilion trail of a cardinal's hat a
cheek turns crimson

maple leaf point
at a fingertip
blood on the bow

Vegan vanilla

The herbivorous dinosaur savours the pearlescent glaze of the ice-cream
defrosted from time as every crystalline moment melts into memory

a brooch of bones
her godmother's
parting gift

pitch perfect pines

pray prey
keep an
eye out

now's
an
insider
coffin

push
(s)ing

pull
(s)ing

after Robert Lax

at a minimum wage war

no
ex
posing

Crow (Fibonacci)

Crow's
poor
skull was
perfectly
intact apart from
the lower beak which swung loose no
matter how many times we wedged it back into place
only with much lamentation
did Crow and his skull
return to
darkness
and
peace

Italian restaurant
winding melancholy
around a fork

rejected i kick the sun into the river Styx

when will bats fly from my two open windows

spring butterfly lost in the camera obscura

moon shot the american way

mug morning craving not to be born again craving

sinking in the monochrome rain

dictionary palace of the winds



a drunken boat anchors in my library

the stamps have fallen off my letters

an ocean's roar finds itself a bedroom

upside down talking the other hemisphere

three white silos
of sequential height
according to her needs

one door to the next
crossing the tiled corridor
to dance with orchids

stepping out of sleep I become an adverb

kireji farming sea stars' arms

uphill all the way to unfinished

if only to refine a black hole's palate

the foehn leans into
over through & against
a lexicon

the conspiracy of the spider webs in the cosmos

the moon on the mountain on the lake the mountain under the moon

above the smog a layer of birds

morning moon where you stood just yesterday

the beam
stuck in
mine own eye

the cross

TOTEM

over
thought
a

head
chiseled
over

my
own

CHENGELKOY*

the
bend
in

the
strait
pulled
on

fishing
line

JIHANGIR*

down
enough
steps
to
have

lost
count
of
all

the
sea

for Asu

solstice

apricot

apricity

the
clouds
rain

the
rain
puddles

the
puddles
clear

into
skies

pan pipes quavering through suburbia the fruit of the apple tree

mute swan just asking for a friend

for the foreseeable future the moon offline

a perfect enso . . .
now how
to get out

open to emptiness rain falls into my insomnia

blowing leaves past our example-setting years

onward
christian
soldiers
cherry-picking
leviticus

***nonet, in which katie entertains the idea of great-uncle ken pulling her baby
tooth at the norfleet family christmas gathering: december 12, 1998***

You consider *how many?* he's pulled
over *HOW many?* years while he
wiggles your loose mouth bone; spins
yarns 'bout stringing teeth to
doorknobs, yanking with
pliers. Little
 eyes turn big—
 pop *There*
 'tis!



***nonet, in which katie bleeds through on a multi-hour window-shopping
trip to the somerset, ky walmart supercenter with granny: 2006***

*S'that time of the month. She had an acc—
she booms to cashier (/ entire store)
before your cough interrupts.*

*Tag's on her side. Red-faced,
you hoist hips up. Clerk
shoots scan gun. Rip
plastic. Ain't
Minnie
Pearl?*

eros
falling on the bones
of kittens

transcribing my sins buffer overflow

dusty windshield the patina of somewhere

in the drawer where I keep my voices

tic-tac-toe
so it goes
Maundy Thursday

graveyard grass will I miss it

autumn rain—
my hollow breath conflated

a bleeding lamb speaks of roses in exile

if I could pick one thing it's the fast fading light

no less than a whisper away this mountain dew

the rain missing me a green comet

In My Father's Final Bout

he never eyed the fade-away hook
that knocked him out but still felt
the cold compress on his head,
still heard the ringing, decades later,
fingers still traced his sore jaw,
bleeding nostrils, black eyes.

Even in the end, his hands made fists.

From the third floor I watch you

step in a short emerald dress
across fading white square
of worn-out asphalt, spit, repeat.
Where you're headed, Isabel,
there must be something better
than an empty half-lit room—
something that wants to unlock.

Sleepy Lonely

Unable to concentrate or distinguish
my hand from a groundswell of singing starlets,
my mind digs up a childhood time capsule:
upswing whip of your blonde ponytail,
spokes of my bicycle fluttering an ace,
second hand stuck—past present future one,
waiting for your steely blues to flutter.

GATELESS GATE

It's a set of stairs
that knows your name
as you fall.

Mark J. Mitchell

Vernacular

Give me a seagull with a
positronic brain & I'll
give you the next leader
of the modern world. A
simple upgrade — that's
all they're waiting for. That,
& gluten-free food scraps.

hung out

to dry, sometime be-
tween the solstice &
the lunar new year

character assassination

If there's a
Charlie in
the drama

then

inevitably

they're the
one who
cops it in

the end.

A rattled saber

Is a matter of
structure. Pattern,
or growth—some
thing like that.

Is a biological
entity, stress
on the bio, not
much logic to it.

the verses they don't mention inferno

swallowing a gospel whole whale

smiting a fig tree out of season words

cloistered and yet surprisingly bubbly

cicadas start up the suicide machine



this morning's sunrise
something something
mass extinction

entirely enough alone unsatisfied orchid

after blossoming back in the holster

all anyone talks about is the chatbot year's first dream

hunting mainly small mammals we replace ourselves every seven years

all day snow gathers the broken machines

a wilderness of blue irises—
so this is how
you will use my future

but what if love...
or if the clouds
repeat our gestures

all my glass gestures...
winterlight
in a rented room

hearing of your death,
I walk through
three decembers

Michael Battisto

keep eating the hours:
put on the north,
that great, gray coat

evening in the linden trees—
for how many lives
can I be your voice?

Michael Battisto

wanting her to remember what was not to forget

all shade on the north face no shadow

drawing the line at drawing the line

blow away the tiny spider on the book with spring breeze

Sip'n Dip Lounge: the mermaid who wears a nose plug

dwarf ginseng on the freshly laundered doilies

river stone staying right where she is

pale green whirligigs before I could read

Unwelcome Relativities

out of time a few nuts scatter waterspouts collapse

the smoldering remain punchlines out of time

the power line hums out of time checkmate in two

out of time composting welts of loose threads

that bloody shirt knot to be falls out of time

tuba skinny out of time on the downbeat

Revergocity

where he gets his tripwire

a short hop crater to grave

back sleeper mattresses savor your canyon

faster than rivers past sausage factories

hard and fast a down and out hollow

flutter dome stirs a ceiling of swallows

specimen pine trained when to weep



touching her keepsakes to dust each one

stage left one lemon of a still life

the same sound track coming as geese going

rising water level with you damn dirty apes

petro c. k.

she owns me petting the cat o' nine tails

my morning head a donut of protest

road breaks in white lips

he stands trapped in the early light of my chest

rushing to where the black balloon bursts into an insight

field edged with ice
the shrieks of blue jays
the shock inside

margins of white petals

flowering shadows wave

the dark night of the soul

attention pivots as on

a dewed fibrous tip

then petals the forest

beyond rocks the body
retreats to the drop-
off visible in grief

fir and cedar fragrance
growing a simpler
transpiration of space

escarpment empties of
wind the crows settle
friction in perception

dew on daffodil
perianths the feeling of
scent in transperence

wintergreen's white a
splash of light on rocks
this freshwater high

wind unheard stops

the other winds

still in the word

reflected clouds a-
drift in river ice
this ordinary life

Ballad

The woman living inside the walls of our house is called Ann. Before being immured she dreamt of becoming a painter's muse and wife. Eventually, she married a carpenter who walled her into the building he was working on...the very house that we live in now. During the day she is still, probably sleeping. But during the night she does nothing else but sings woeful folk songs. Through my sleepless nights instead of counting sheep, I count the hot and cold drops of her laments as they fall upon my brow.

The ladder

Father is napping. His sleep seems undisturbed. No noise can reach him. Viewers and flowers are everywhere. In a trance, mother keeps telling us that she could never have imagined that a man's body might weight less than a lamb. Mostly carnations. Some red and some white. If the body is well hidden, the soul cannot find it and eventually departs. Where once a walnut grew, now there is a ladder he must climb to reach the sky.

heat swelling south of her equator

the hum of highways inhaling green meadows

moon ghosting the machine of the sea's teeth

Unsharp

In her reading, only one spoken word is too young for any inner doubt.

vector arrows
I ponder the problem
of the roadless sky

Omission

mother's day begins with disturbing pigeons

out of okays autumn rain

not a word repeating the riverwalk

enclosing the sky of a necessary possession

to see i stain the apple's flux

nowhere in the middle of somewhere bloodied



the translator how one word makes the rain



the blue river
a poet
plants a surface

chasing a deer the letter A

a question
scenes
of red Mexico

trying to tiptoe around the animals

the blue boat upriver in the Ganga realizes it doesn't exist

chicken wing refuses to be eaten until it is loved

the wind
there
on my night table

dreaming in a foreign currency

Roberta Beach Jacobson

weeds

Cygnus

swans
on the river
at night
silver swans
in the night
the night
on the river
a silver river
at night
the swan
in the river
of night

the sound of his glove found in the toolbox

the length of the measuring tape the memory coils into itself

the weight of a 5 lb hammer centerstrikes the ten penny big bang

9" double edge carbide blade shark teeth rip through the nothing was said

alto sax shaped cat's claw pry wide black night what he said stripped every dream

cold cut steel light clamors against the unspoken the toolbox opened

why the odometer stops taxing the snow

this blue over that on the viola's tongue

violets still fat while dissolving the symptoms

fissures leaving the womb a skinless god

we are walking through three ages an inch away



house next house not even sparrows shared

dawn
atom

i
stic

embr
yon

ic
a

bort
ed

they
return

full

from

diff
erent

stars

full
of
light

of

stars

thru and
the glass
mask
dawn's
tongue
tastes
talons
and
glass
talons

in
waves

imp
ing

on
waves

a
wing

on
thine

pressed
upon

hell

heaven
pressed

upon

a
tad

pole's
mouth

it
is
rain
ing
is
it
rain
ing
it
is

al
ready

pulled

over

them

the

sleep
ing

smoke

giant

lonely
to the
garden
away
goes
evening
singing
blue
falls
inside

the
voice of
 birds

on
the
horse

on
the
flight on
 the
 eye

the dragon still lives in an old wall phone

royal blue dragonfly towards the island of Kythera

quiet stream the sentence of least resistance

moonmilk exchanging opinions on opiliones

her body defies the grammatical attitudes

the peeing sun blurs the world

her eyes suck things like breasts

at her navel the lack

i exist like a dislocated organ

Kaffeeklatsch

I take my coffee with a lot of cream and sugar, like a wussy. Or you could say, I take my cream and sugar with a heavy dash of coffee, which keeps things exciting.

walking on hands the sober man



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Johannes S. H. Bjerg who also supplied the photos.

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